



THE ILLEGAL KILLING, TAKING AND TRADE OF MIGRATORY BIRDS

Bird trapped in a net found along the Egyptian coast © Holger Schulz

KEY MESSAGE

Millions of migratory birds are being lost each year as a result of illegal killing, taking and trade. Numbers that are totally unsustainable and which alongside other pressures such as habitat loss and climate change are leading to many once common species being threatened with extinction.

What is illegal killing, taking and trade?

Illegal killing, taking and trade refer to those activities that deliberately contravene national, regional and international laws. These criminal acts include a wide range of illegal actions such as shooting, trapping, poisoning, netting and liming. All the flyways across the world are affected.

Illegal activities are being practised worldwide undermining the sustainable use of natural resources and threatening biological diversity. The main incentives are subsistence uses, recreational activities, organized crime and traditional practice. The main aim of illegal trade of live specimens is use as cage-birds or decoys.

At the international level, these criminal acts involve violations of intergovernmental treaties such as the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), the African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (AEWA), the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), which regulates exports and imports of wildlife.

Some facts and figures on illegal killing, taking and trade of migratory birds

Poaching is a particular and growing concern across the Mediterranean region. According to BirdLife International, among the 561 bird species regularly occurring across the region, 67 per cent are known or likely to be affected by illegal killing and taking.

An estimated 25 million migratory birds are known or likely to be illegally killed or trapped each year in more than 20 countries in the Mediterranean. Alone in the Eastern and Southern Mediterranean, more than 20 million individual migratory birds are reported to be illegally killed or taken on average annually.

The taxonomic groups most affected are songbirds (more than 20 million every year), waterbirds (1 million), pigeons and doves (around 1 million).

- > **Common quail (*Coturnix coturnix*):** More than 1.6 million birds are being illegally killed or taken on average each year.
- > **European turtle-dove (*Streptopelia turtur*):** Reportedly 600,000 birds are being illegally killed or taken on average each year.
- > **Common coot (*Fulica atra*):** Approximately 280,000 birds are being illegally killed or taken every year.

Examples of affected species in other regions:

- > **Grey Crowned-crane (*Balearica regolorum*):** As well as by habitat loss and heavy use of agricultural pesticides the species is also threatened by live-trapping for trade. The global population may have declined by over 50% in 19 years.
- > **Shoebill (*Balaeniceps rex*):** This is a highly coveted species in illegal live trade. An estimated 5,000 to 8,000 birds remain in the wild.
- > **Northern Bald Ibis (*Geronticus eremita*):** It is classified as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List as a result of habitat loss and hunting.
- > **Red-breasted Goose (*Branta ruficollis*):** These birds are illegally killed throughout their range.

The illegal trade of birds is estimated to affect between 2 to 5 million birds per year worldwide. Live exotic birds and elephant ivory are the two CITES Appendix I products most commonly sold online, the majority of which is suspected to be the result of illegal activities.

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CMS actions - The Task Force: MIKT

In order to tackle the issue in a most efficient way, the Inter-governmental Task Force on Illegal Killing, Taking and Trade of Migratory Birds in the Mediterranean (MIKT) has been created under CMS to facilitate international cooperation. It aims to be a practical tool that will assist countries to take action to reduce or eliminate the problem of illegal killing based on a “zero tolerance” approach. It will enable the exchange of information, training and education, law enforcement, deterrence and prevention to reduce the mortality rate among migratory birds.

MIKT brings together governmental representatives of CMS Parties around the Mediterranean, including the European Union and other stakeholders. Representatives from non-CMS Parties as well as relevant international organizations and networks are also part of MIKT as observers. It has been convened by the CMS Secretariat in conjunction with the Secretariat of AEWA, the Raptors MOU Coordinating Unit and the Working Group of the African-Eurasian Migratory Landbirds Action Plan (AEMLAP).

The Task Force has been established under CMS COP Resolution 11.16 on the illegal killing, taking and trade of migratory birds. The aim of the Task Force is to facilitate the implementation of the existing guidelines and action plans, in particular the Tunis Action Plan 2013-2020 for the Eradication of Illegal Killing, Trapping and Trade of Wild Birds. It will also consider whether any new guidelines, action plans or other recommendations to respond to specific problems are necessary.

MIKT is kindly sponsored by the European Commission through the Global Public Goods and Challenges (GPGC Programme) Cooperation Agreements with UNEP.



WORLD MIGRATORY BIRD DAY

The global campaign spearheaded by CMS and AEWA aims to raise awareness of threats to migratory birds and the need to better protect them. In 2016, the theme of the World Migratory Bird campaign is illegal killing, taking and trade of migratory birds. It puts the spotlight on the impact on migratory birds and how these actions can be prevented.

COP RESOLUTION 11.15 ON PREVENTING POISONING OF MIGRATORY BIRDS

COP11 adopted the “Guidelines to prevent the risk of Poisoning to Migratory Birds”.



Turtle Dove © Sergey Dereliev, www.dereliev-photography.com



Common Coot © Luc Viatour, www.lucnix.be

About CMS

The Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), also known as the Bonn Convention, works for the conservation of a wide array of endangered migratory animals worldwide through negotiation and implementation of agreements and species action plans. It has 123 Member States.

CMS engages all relevant stakeholders in addressing wildlife crime in concert with all other aspects of wildlife conservation and management.

CMS instruments

Animals receive protection under CMS through listing on its two Appendices, through global or regional agreements and through action plans.

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